

James River and Kanawha Canal:
South River Dam and Lock
Lexington vicinity
Rockbridge County
Virginia

HAER No. VA-22

WASH
72-LEX.V
1B-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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James River and Kanawha Canal: South River Dam and Lock

HAER No. VA-22

Location: South bank of Maury River, 0.3 miles North of South River, .9 miles East of Interstate 81, 3.3 miles East of Lexington
Lexington vicinity, Rockbridge County, Virginia

UTM: (approximately) 17.642250.4181530

Date of Construction: 1859

Builder/Designer: North River Navigation Company

Present Owner: Unknown

Present Use: Unused

Significance: Located on the western bank of the Maury River (formerly the North River) approximately one-quarter mile upstream from its junction with the South River. In its present condition, the dam is approximately 200 feet long and 6 feet in height and is constructed out of rough and smooth cut granite laid up in running bond. The lock is of similar construction and is approximately 15 feet wide and 100 feet long. Only the western section of the dam still exists, as the river has been allowed to return to its natural level. However, the lock remains in its original condition except for the absence of the wooden gates. According to Dr. William Trout, III, the South River Dam and Lock were part of a canal system designed to link Lexington, Virginia, with the James River. Construction of this system began following the organization of the North River Navigation Company in 1841. Work continued until 1858 when the still unfinished works were bought by the James River and Kanawha Company. Following this transaction, work on the canal was reinstituted and, by 1862, the route was navigable and complete. Dr. Trout states the South River and Dam and Lock were built circa 1859.

Transmitted by: Jean Yearby, HAER, 1984, from data compiled by Charles Parrott, 1971